

Prosecution Says Sirhan Tried to Tailor Account

By ARTHUR EVERETT

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sirhan Bishara Sirhan tried to tailor his account of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's assassination with an eye toward self preservation, the state suggested Wednesday. A defense witness disagreed.

Deputy Dist. Atty. David N. Fitts, saying that Sirhan at first denied testimony by prosecution witnesses that indicated the slaying was premeditated, asked whether this did not point to "some position on his part that indicates self preservation?"

The defense's star psychiatric witness, Dr. Bernard Diamond, replied "No."

Diamond is a professor of law, psychiatry and criminology at the University of California. He has described Sirhan as a computerized killer who subconsciously programmed himself for the assassination because he considered Kennedy pro-Israel.

Fitts led up to his questioning by citing Sirhan's presence at the Ambassador Hotel assassination scene two days before Kennedy's June 5, 1968, shooting.

Also, Fitts said, Sirhan practiced rapid firing at a target range a few hours before he put three bullets into Kennedy, who was campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In each case, Fitts said, Sirhan tried to get around what might be construed as premeditation by initially denying the testimony of state witnesses. "Sirhan has an enormous schizophrenic preoccupation with details," Diamond said. "Sirhan seizes on individual items in his behavior, not of others, and makes a great to do about his being right and others wrong. I can't accept this as part of his legal strategy."

Sirhan is on trial for his life and the chief element of the first degree murder charge against him is that he premeditated Kennedy's death.

The defendant appeared deep-

ly disturbed by suggestions that he had lied. His lips on occasions formed obscenities in Fitts's direction.

There were a series of even-voiced but sharp exchanges between the trim, 46-year-old Fitts and the slight, gray defense witness.

Diamond protested at various

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times: "Please don't put words in my mouth . . . I did not say what you say I did. . . I cannot allow you to distort what I said. . . I don't think the way you do Mr. Fitts."

"I don't know why you're dodging this way," Fitts declared at one point, but the jury was ordered to disregard the remark. When Diamond said he would like to read from an article he had written, Fitts said: "I bet you would, but I just want an answer."

Diamond had testified that his opinion of Sirhan's mental condition was based in part on interviews with the defendant's mother, Mary. She was asked about her son's exposure as a child to Arab-Zionist warfare in his native Jerusalem.